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# Palestinian Official Discusses How The U.N. Can Help End Violence In Israel And Gaza

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Heard on All Things Considered



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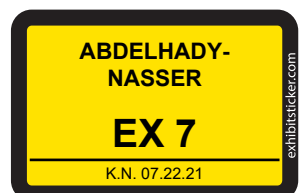
NPR's Mary Louise Kelly talks with Feda Abdelhady, the Palestinians' deputy permanent observer to the U.N., about how the United Nations can help end the violence in Israel and Gaza.

MARY LOUISE KELLY, HOST:

What is the role of the United Nations in trying to bring about a cease-fire in the Middle East? Diplomats have been meeting. But the U.S. has vetoed any formal reaction by the Security Council, so the meetings continue. We're going to bring in one of the Palestinian officials engaged in those talks. Feda Abdelhady is the Palestinians' deputy permanent observer to the U.N., and she is on the line now. Ambassador, welcome.

FEDA ABDELHADY: Thank you for having me.

KELLY: Is it fair to say the United Nations is paralyzed?



ABDELHADY: At the moment, the United Nations Security Council is paralyzed. Many countries at the U.N. have been mobilized in the past 10 days, in particular regarding the crisis that has engulfed the occupied Palestinian territory and the Palestinian people as a whole. But the council itself remains paralyzed due to the position of the United States on the council that has not allowed it to speak with one voice, to express itself or to undertake any action to respond to this crisis situation.

KELLY: OK. So let's dig in on this - on the U.S. position. As we noted, the U.S. has so far blocked any statement from the Security Council condemning the violence. The U.S. ambassador to the U.N., Linda Thomas-Greenfield, says the U.S. is - and I'll quote - "working tirelessly through diplomatic channels to try to bring an end to the conflict." Do you disagree that quiet, behind-the-scenes diplomacy might be effective here?

ABDELHADY: We think that quiet, behind-the-scenes diplomacy is necessary and particularly when human lives are at stake. But we don't see a contradiction between international action through the Security Council, which is mandated by the U.N. charter to maintain international peace and security and has adopted multiple resolutions on the protection of civilians in situations of armed conflict and therefore can contribute to the effort. We don't see behind-the-scenes diplomatic efforts and Security Council efforts as contradictory to those efforts. They are not mutually exclusive but, in fact, can be complementary.

KELLY: Although, practically speaking, what would be the impact of a statement condemning the violence? Realistically, would you expect that to actually cause either party on the ground to stop shooting?

ABDELHADY: I think that there is more to what diplomats at the U.N. are trying to do than just to simply condemn an action. These actions that are being undertaken are in violation of international law. Israel is an occupying power. But beyond that, it's about prescribing action that can bring an end to the violence, that can protect civilian lives and that can contribute towards a just solution to this decadeslong injustice. And we also cannot underestimate the power that these expressions from the Security Council have, whether it is to the aggressor or to the occupied population. There is a need for

the Palestinian people to hear that the international community sees and understands their pain and is responding to it.

KELLY: So you're saying the messaging can play an important role, even if it is not binding on the ground?

ABDELHADY: I think the messaging can certainly play an important role, and that includes also in sending a message to Israel that its actions are not condoned but rather condemned and that there will be consequences for noncompliance with international law and for its continued violation of human rights.

KELLY: Circling back to the meetings, the whole U.N., the General Assembly will meet again tomorrow, and it's the conflict in the Middle East that's on the agenda. What are you hoping to come out of that?

ABDELHADY: The General Assembly meeting tomorrow has been called for by many member states in order to express themselves on the Palestine question and to call for the implementation of countless U.N. resolutions, including resolutions that have called for protection of the Palestinian civilian population. Those resolutions have never been implemented. The General Assembly will come together tomorrow to collectively address this issue and has the right and the duty to do so.

KELLY: Ambassador, thank you.

ABDELHADY: Thank you.

KELLY: Feda Abdelhady is the Palestinian's deputy permanent observer at the United Nations. And I want to note elsewhere on the show, we hear from Israel's former ambassador to the U.S.

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